

part of the lake behind us, and traversed the same flat dreary region, formerly inundated, as on the day before. There were however a few stalks of kamisch in one or two dry watercourses, but that was all. On the other hand the belt of withered, languishing tamarisks on mounds, that I have spoken of above, was entirely absent here. We once more crossed over the ice-sheets of the Sasik-jar and the Tasch-uj; these two brooks are reputed to unite immediately east of our route in a district called Tajighlik. From the distance we could see how the ice-sheets branched and spread out radially, indicating that the brooks break up into deltaic arms.

The spring of Julghun-dung, where we halted (alt. 2865 m.), formed a large sheet of ice between the low, soft clay hills, dotted over with starved tamarisks; it is from these that the place derives its name.

On 17th December we set off for the Akato-tagh, travelling N. 60° E., carrying with us ice to last four days, for there was reason to believe that the regions we were now approaching were practically waterless. It was with a good deal of eager interest that I started upon the journey through this the northernmost part of the mountain regions, for no European had ever set foot there before me. Nor did any of the men whom I had with me possess even the slightest knowledge of the rounded dome-shaped, greyish yellow, barren Akato-tagh; indeed none of them had even so much as heard that any native had ever attempted to cross over that part of the range. I had therefore, on 16th Dec., sent on men in advance to find out whether the glen which appeared to be the most favourable could be traversed with camels; and they had reported that it led up to a pass which we could use. Due north of Julghun-dung the range appeared to be rather lower; but a reconnaissance in that direction also had convinced us that the glens there were scarcely passable even to men on foot; they were rather narrow gorges, deeply excavated, very steep, and excessively fantastic and capricious. Towards the north-east however, although the crest is higher, the ascent is longer and easy.

The belt of hills with vegetation, which evidently is connected with the similar belt of Tschigelik-kasch, came to an end immediately north-east of the camp. It forms a narrow strip a short distance from the foot of the mountains, and bears a striking resemblance to the belt at Dunglik along the northern foot of the Astin-tagh. Both strips consist of small hills, and their vegetation is made up for the most part of tamarisks and kamisch. This regularly arranged vegetation is undoubtedly due to the moisture from the adjacent mountains; that the moisture here does approach near to the surface is evident from the slight depth of the well of Dunglik, and the fact that the spring of Julghun-dung emerges here into daylight. And in both cases it is the vegetation that gives occasion to the formation of the small hills, in that its roots bind the loose material together and consolidate it.

After passing a final strip of vegetation at close quarters, we again had before us the tolerably hard saj with coarse sand and a sprinkling of gravel. All at once the country became absolutely barren; there was not one scrap even of wind-driven dry scrub to be seen anywhere. A short distance below the entrance of the